

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-10 /073 W

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P R 101410Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY LOME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9119

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L L O M E 1 0 1 5

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PINS PORS SHUM TO

SUBJECT: CATHOLIC BISHOP FORCED TO FLEE TOGO AFTER PREACHING

AGAINST GOVERNMENT; ATAKPAME CATHEDRAL AND MONASTERY RE-
PORTED SACKED BY MOBS

REF: A) LOME A-24, MAY 4, 1975

B) LOME 2324, OCT 7, 1974

NOTE: TRANSMISSION DELAYED BY ELECTRICAL FAILURE MORNING MAY 10.

1. CATHOLIC BISHOP MONSIGNOR ATAKPA OF ATAKPAME (LARGE TOWN
150 KM. NORTH OF LOME) ATTACKED EYADEMA GOVERNMENT IN HARD-
HITTING POLITICAL SERMON IN HIS CATHEDRAL APRIL 25, TWO DAYS
PRIOR TO 15TH ANNIVERSARY TOGOLESE INDEPENDENCE (REF A). SATURDAY
NIGHT APRIL 26 MOB INVADED CATHEDRAL, SMASHED WINDOWS AND
DAMAGED INTERIOR. MONDAY APRIL 28, CHIEF OF CIRCUMSCRIPTION AND
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LOCAL RPT LEADERS REPORTED INCIDENTS TO PRESIDENT EYADEMA IN

LOME. WEDNESDAY APRIL 30 EYADEMA, HIS CABINET, RPT POLITICAL BUREAU MEMBERS HELD PUBLIC CONFRONTATION IN ATAKPAME TOWN STADIUM, WITH ALL FOUR OF COUNTRY'S CATHOLIC BISHOPS ORDERED TO ATTEND, WHILE "THOUSANDS" OF MILITARY AND POLICE REPORTEDLY PATROLLED TOWN. PRESIDENT DENOUNCED AND REFUTED BISHOP'S ATTACKS, GAVE HIERARCHY SEVERE WARNING AGAINST FUTURE ATTACKS.

2. SUNDAY MAY 4 MSGR. ATAKPA PREACHED AGAINST GOT SECOND TIME. MONDAY MAY 5 MOB TOOK TO STREETS AGAIN, MARCHED ON MONASTERY (UNDERSTOOD TO SERVE ALSO AS BISHOP'S RESIDENCE) AND THOROUGHLY SACKED IT. PRESS AND OTHER MEDIA COVERAGE ONLY BEGAN MAY 6; FINALLY FLOWERED MAY 8 WITH FRONT-PAGE ACCOUNT OF STADIUM CONFRONTATION. BISHOP ATAKPA MEANWHILE HAS REPORTEDLY FLED CLANDESTINELY AND MAY BE IN ROME.

3. FRIDAY MAY 9 PRESIDENT'S DIRECTOR OF CABINET LACLE ORGANIZED MASS DEMONSTRATION OF JRPT AND OTHERS TO MARCH TO LOME CATHEDRAL AT SIX A.M. TODAY, MAY 10. DEMONSTRATION CALLED OFF LATE YESTERDAY, PROBABLY BECAUSE CATHEDRAL RECTOR GBIKPI (BROTHER EX-MAYOR SIVOMEY) REFUSED CANCEL MONTH'S MIND REQUIEM FOR HIS SISTER-IN-LAW SCHEDULED FOR SAME TIME THIS MORNING. GOVERNMENT'S REASON GIVEN FOR CALLING OFF MARCH, HOWEVER, WAS SIMPLY THAT PRESIDENT HAD DECIDED LEAVE LOME FOR WEEKEND.

4. REQUIUM HELD 6:30 THIS MORNING AS SCHEDULED; CATHEDRAL WAS PACKED TO DOORS WITH SOME 1500-2000, LARGELY MIDDLE CLASS, CATHOLICS, FRIENDS OF POPULAR GBIKPI-BENISSAN FAMILY. LIFE APPEARS PERFECTLY NORMAL IN TOWN TODAY, BUT LATEST RUMOR IS DEMONSTRATION WILL BE HELD MONDAY MAY 12.

5. COMMENT: THIS IS SECOND MAJOR PUBLIC ATTACK ON EYADEMA REGIME BY CATHOLIC CLERGYMAN SINCE OCTOBER 1974 (REF B). GOVERNMENT'S COUNTER-ATTACK IN FORM OF MOB VIOLENCE AND PUBLIC DENUNCIATION OF CLERGY IN STADIUM MARKS WORST EPISODE IN CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS IN MEMORY OF OBSERVERS HERE. BISHOP ATAKPA REPORTEDLY CRITICIZED NEAR-DEIFICATION OF EYADEMA SINCE SAKAKAWA PLANE CRASH, WASTE OF PEOPLE'S MONEY ON "ANIMATION", GOVERNMENT'S NATIONALIZATION OF CTMB PHOSPHATE MINING COMPANY, GOVT'S FAILURE TO RECOGNIZE EFFORTS OF OTHERS, INCLUDING HIMSELF, IN TOGO'S INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE. REGARDLESS OF TRUTH OR MERIT OF ANY OF

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ATAKPA'S CRITICISMS -- AND CALLING CTMB NATIONALIZATION "THEFT" WAS FOOLISH AND INACCURATE, NO RPT NO CATHOLICS, LAY OR CLERIC, ARE ASSOCIATING THEMSELVES PUBLICLY WITH HIS CHARGES; ONLY DEFENSE THEY ARE MAKING FOR HIM IS "HE IS SICK", AS LOME'S ARCHBISHOP TOLD EYADEMA AT STADIUM. BUT DESPITE APPEARANCES OF CLASSIC CHURCH-STATE STRUGGLE WE HAVE RELIABLE, IF SKETCHY, REPORTS THAT MANY OTHER THINGS ARE AT WORK: CATHOLIC-PROTESTANT ANIMOSITY IN ATAKPAME, TRIBAL JEALOUSY AND RIVALRY AMONG

ATAKPA'S OWN CLERGY--INCLUDING SOME SCHEMING TO SPEED HIS RETIREMENT, CATHOLIC DISSATISFACTION OVER GOT'S REFUSAL TO EITHER INCREASE ITS SUBSIDY TO CONFESSIONAL SCHOOLS OR LET SCHOOLS RAISE TUITIONS AFTER PRESIDENT DECREED 20 PERCENT PAY RAISE IN JANUARY. ALL THESE FACTORS ASIDE, EPISODE DEMONSTRATES VIVIDLY THAT EYADEMA BROOKS NO RPT NO PUBLIC CRITICISM OF HIMSELF OR HIS WAY OF GOVERNING, AND CAN MOBILIZE MASSES OF PEOPLE TO SUPPORT HIM AND INTIMATE OPPOSITION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: EXPULSION, CATHOLICS, PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, RELIGIOUS LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 MAY 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LOME01015
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750165-0080
From: LOME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750563/aaaacewf.tel
Line Count: 124
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 LOME A-24, 75 MAY 4, 75 1975
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 MAY 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <20 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CATHOLIC BISHOP FORCED TO FLEE TOGO AFTER PREACHING AGAINST GOVERNMENT; ATAKPAME CATHEDRAL AND MONASTERY RE-
TAGS: PINT, PINS, PORS, SHUM, TO, (ATAKPA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006